



## How-to-Guide: Publishing an Advance Release Calendar

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# Publishing an Advance Release Calendar

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Publishing an “advance release calendar” or an official release calendar is a recommended international best practice.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has taken steps to enhance member country transparency and openness, including setting voluntary standards for dissemination of economic and financial data. The Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) was established by the IMF to guide members that have, or might seek, access to international capital markets in providing their economic and financial data to the public. The IMF seeks an advance release calendar (ARC) containing release dates for the current month and at least the following three months for each prescribed category of data.

Similarly, the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), describes and defines the set of business processes needed to produce official statistics. It provides a standard framework and harmonised terminology to help statistical organisations to modernise their statistical production processes, as well as to share methods and components. The GSBPM promotes the use of an advance release calendar and defines it as

“the schedule for release of data, which are publicly disseminated so as to provide prior notice of the precise release dates on which a national statistical agency, other national agency, or international organisation undertakes to release specified statistical information to the public. Such information may be provided for statistical releases in the coming week, month, quarter or year.”<sup>1</sup>

The creation of an advance release calendar involves two key steps:

### A. Internal planning and coordination

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<sup>1</sup> (Source: <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/ClickSDMX/ReleaseCalendar>, accessed February 17, 2017)

**B. Preparation of the advance release calendar for external publication**

## A. Internal planning and coordination

### Establish the content to be released

Compile a list or database of all subject matters or themes that should be released, e.g., quarterly and monthly Gross Domestic Product (GDP), monthly and annual unemployment.

- Communicate with all subject-matter areas to determine their releases.
- Determine frequency of each release, e.g., annual, quarterly, monthly.
- Include relevant information including release title, reference period, and release date.

### Select an appropriate calendar tool

Research and find a tool to use for your calendar and release planning.

- Ideally, the calendar should be accessible to a number of people. The tool could be a spreadsheet file on a shared drive, a physical paper calendar on a wall, or a specialized calendar application.

### Identify and insert release dates for each release in the year

Determine a release date for each subject matter/release for the entire year.

- Ensure the release dates/weeks do not coincide with holidays or place an undue burden on any subject-matter team.
- Consider spreading out the releases to ensure not all of your releases are planned for the same day or same week.
- In October, establish your annual release for the next year. In other words, well in advance of the next year (the process can take a few weeks, as some subject-matter areas must consult with key stakeholders when choosing their release dates).
- Establish yearly calendars once a year, publications should be released as planned, no changes should occur once it has been established and released to the public.

Find an appropriate method for organizing the calendar, e.g., by month and by subject-matter area.

A calendar can have two methods of displaying the information: releases by subject-matter area and releases by month. Both contain the same information (e.g., product title, reference period, release date) but present it differently for ease of reference.

**Create a process**

Determine who coordinates the calendar planning, who approves the calendar, and who disseminates it online or by other means. Establish a process and consequences for when a release date is not met (e.g., escalation process). The process should be approved and well-documented.

Maintain the process from year to year for predictability and to accustom the organization and its key stakeholders.

## **B. Preparation of the advance release calendar for external publication**

**Communicate the release calendar**

This should include communication with media, data users, data providers and other government agencies. A number of venues can be used to publish, announce and communicate the calendar: Internet, email or print media.

A communications plan for announcing releases should be considered. This includes a process to announce “upcoming releases.”

Consider using different methods to announce the release dates for upcoming releases. I.e.:

- One yearly announcement for the full-year calendar.
- One weekly announcement for releases in upcoming weeks to remind users.

At Statistics Canada, there are a number of “upcoming releases” schedules where the advance release calendar is advertised.

- The official release schedule posted online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dai-quo/cal3-eng.htm>. The same information is posted by subject or theme: [http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dai-quo/subjects\\_sujets-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dai-quo/subjects_sujets-eng.htm).
- The release calendar is also announced via emails to media and stakeholders on a weekly basis.
- The full calendar for a given year is also available in PDF format online.



### **Abide by the calendar dates**

As outlined in the International Monetary Fund's SDDS and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's GSBPM, it is recommended that statistical agencies create an advance release calendar and abide by the dates. There should be no changes to the calendar once it has been announced to the public. Minor adjustments due to logistical considerations, or due to legitimate changes in stakeholder needs, are understandable, but should be avoided.

Any change brought to a release date that has already been published should be subject to a rigorous, pre-determined process of management approval and oversight.

In cases where a date cannot be established in advance for a given release, consider identifying a specific release week as opposed to a specific date.